

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 1, 2002

The Honorable Christine Todd Whitman  
Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC, 20460

Dear Administrator Whitman:

We are writing to urge you to issue regulations to control raw and inadequately treated sewage discharges from sanitary sewer overflows and to warn the public as well as public health authorities when sanitary sewer overflows occur. These regulations were announced by EPA in January 2001, and were developed as consensus recommendations of federal, state, and local officials, sewer operators, public health authorities, and the environmental community. However, more than a year and a half later, the regulations remain in limbo. In addition, we urge you not to weaken the existing prohibition on discharges of untreated sewage under the Clean Water Act (CWA) that has been in place since the 1970s.

In 2000 alone, there were 40,000 sanitary sewer overflows of inadequately treated sewage carrying bacteria, viruses, and fecal matter into basements, streets, playgrounds, and waterways across the country and 400,000 basement backups. Sanitary sewers are designed to carry wastes from buildings to sewage treatment plants, but when they overflow, they dump raw sewage into basements, beaches, streets, and waterways. Sanitary sewer overflows contain bacteria and viruses, fecal matter, untreated industrial wastes, toilet paper, and a host of other wastes. Sewer overflows cause the spread of infectious diseases, beach closings, fish kills, and shellfish bed closures. In particular, pathogens in inadequately treated sewage can cause gastroenteritis, dysentery, hepatitis, and respiratory illness. The consequences of contact with sewage-infested waters are greater for children, the elderly, and those with weakened immune systems.

About 1/3 of all Americans visit the beach each summer. Yet, many of those beaches will be unsafe for swimming due to sewage spills and overflows. According to NRDC's report, *Testing the Waters*, sewage spills and overflows accounted for more than 1880 closings and advisories in 2001. U.S. EPA estimates that between 1.8 and 3.5 million Americans get sick every year from swimming in waters contaminated by sanitary sewer overflows.

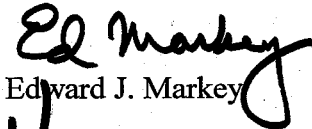
In January of 2001, U.S. EPA announced a modest package of proposed regulations designed to minimize bacteria-laden sewer overflows into streets, waterways, and basements and make public reporting and notification of sewer overflows mandatory. EPA estimated the cost of implementing those regulations at only \$1.92 per U.S. household per year. The consensus rules would require greater prevention of sewer overflows, prompt identification of and response to minimize overflows when they do

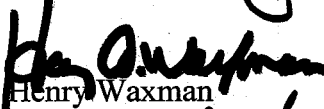
occur, enhanced public notification of overflows, and forgiveness of overflows that occur in extreme weather events.

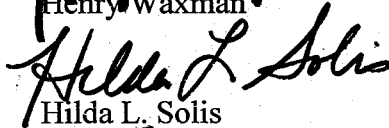
We respectfully urge you to move forward with the consensus regulations to protect the American public from the health threats posed by sewer overflows, and to maintain the existing prohibition on raw sewage discharges under the Clean Water Act. We need these rules to keep raw sewage out of the water and to warn the public about disease-causing raw sewage discharges that they may come into contact with.

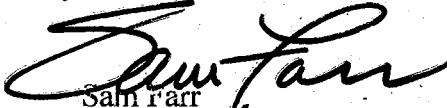
Thank you for your help with this vitally important matter.

Sincerely,

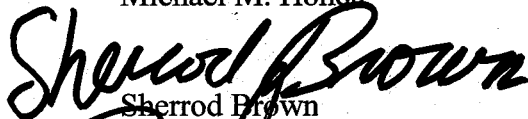
  
Edward J. Markey

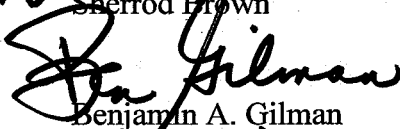
  
Henry Waxman

  
Hilda L. Solis

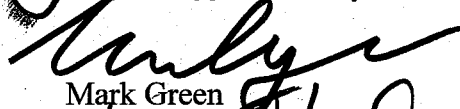
  
Sam Farr

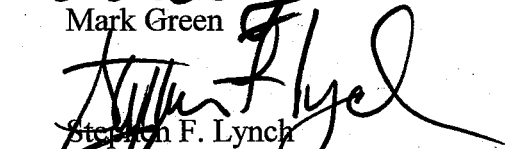
  
Michael M. Honda

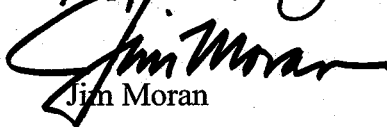
  
Sherrod Brown

  
Benjamin A. Gilman

  
Lloyd Doggett

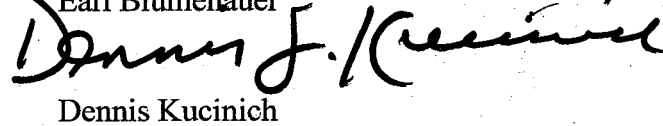
  
Mark Green

  
Stephen F. Lynch

  
Jim Moran

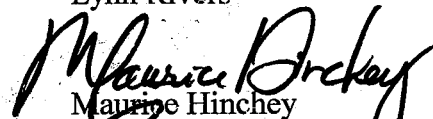
  
George Miller

  
Earl Blumenauer

  
Dennis Kucinich

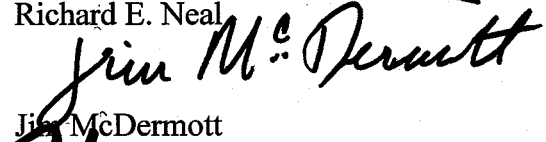
  
Barbara Lee

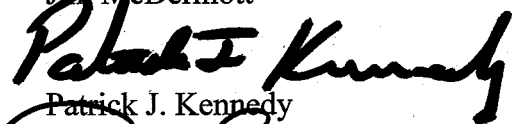
  
Lynn Rivers

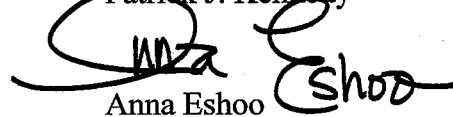
  
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Peter Deutsch

  
Richard E. Neal

  
Jim McDermott

  
Patrick J. Kennedy

  
Anna Eshoo

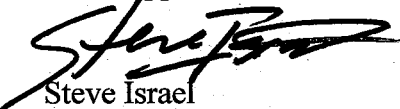
  
Lynn Woolsey

  
Jose E. Serrano

  
Joseph M. Hoefel


  
Neil Abercrombie

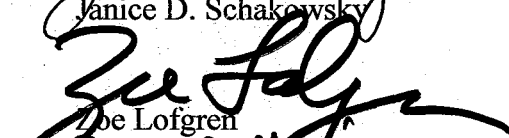
  
Lois Capps

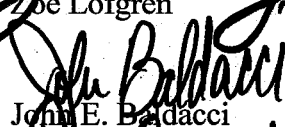
  
Steve Israel

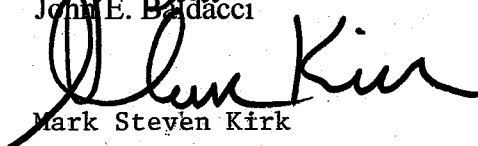
  
Tom Lantos

  
Portney Pete Stark

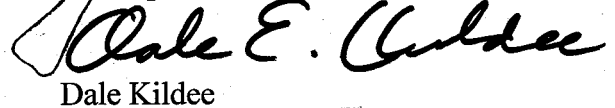
  
Janice D. Schakowsky

  
Zoe Lofgren

  
John E. Baldacci

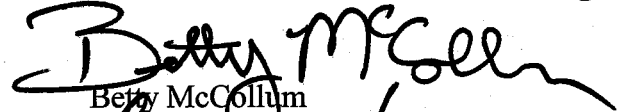
  
Mark Steven Kirk

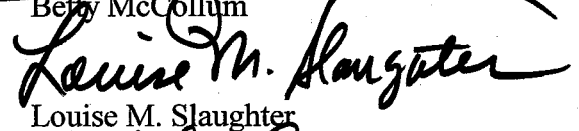
  
John Spratt

  
Dale Kildee

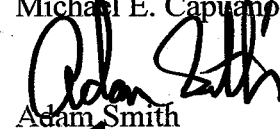
  
Elijah E. Cummings

  
Charles A. Gonzalez

  
Betty McCollum

  
Louise M. Slaughter

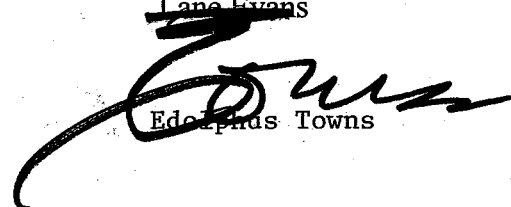
  
Michael E. Capuano

  
Adam Smith

  
Diana DeGette

  
Frank Pallone, Jr.

  
Lane Evans

  
Edolphus Towns